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EXCISE

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ACTION EA-09

INFO GPM 03 SC 01 RSC 01 USIA 12 H 02 NSC 10 NSA 02 L 03 INR 07 P 04
CIA 04 DOD 01 SP 02 SS 35 SAH 02 AID 30 RSR 01 IO P1/160 W

R 121100Z AUG 67
FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4493
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 3764
CINCPAC
AMCONSUL DANANG 717
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE 2139

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 2968

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJECT: VIET CONG ATTITUDE TOWARD UPCOMING NATIONAL ELECTIONS

REF: A. STATE 18728
B. SAIGON 880
C. SAIGON 2284
D. SAIGON 2257
E. SAIGON 2689

1. REFERENCE A CITES INDICATIONS THAT VIET CONG MAY BE RELYING PRIMARILY ON PROPAGANDA AND OTHER NON-VIOLENT MEANS TO DISCREDIT

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NATIONAL ELECTIONS RATHER THAN ON PHYSICAL ACTS OF VIOLENCE AND COERCION.

2. ALTHOUGH IT IS TOO EARLY TO KNOW FOR CERTAIN WHAT THE VC WILL ACTUALLY TRY TO DO, AND THERE IS SOME AMBIGUITY IN

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REVIEWED BY [signature] DATE 10/7/81
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

EXCISE

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THEIR PROPAGANDA AT THIS STAGE, THE BULK OF THE RECENT EVIDENCE WE HAVE SO FAR INDICATES THEY PLAN ON DISCREDITING AND DISRUPTING THE ELECTIONS WITH ALL MEANS AT THEIR DISPOSAL, INCLUDING VIOLENCE. THE VC CONCEIVABLY MAY ATTEMPT TO ASSASSINATE ONE OR MORE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES ATTRIBUTING THE ACT IF POSSIBLE TO THE GVN.

3. HANOI AND VC RADIO ELECTION COMMENTARY HAS BEEN VOLUMINOUS, WITH CALLS FOR ELECTION BOYCOTT BEING ISSUED AS EARLY AS JULY 2 (REF B). SUBSEQUENT COMMENT HAS EMPHASIZED BOYCOTT (WITH ADDED BLESSING OF NLF CENTRAL COMMITTEE PRESIDIUM IN JULY 28 STATEMENT) PLUS RECENT CALLS ON "COMPATRIOTS" TO "SMASH" ELECTIONS (REF C). HOWEVER, THERE APPEARS TO BE SOME AMBIGUITY IN ENEMY PROPAGANDA ON THIS POINT. WHILE THEY ARE ON RECORD AS CALLING FOR "SMASHING" ELECTION, VC THREATS OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE HAVE NOT YET APPROACHED LAST YEAR'S DAILY "SMASH" CRESCENDO.

4. ON THE OTHER HAND, DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE IS ACCUMULATING

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TO EFFECT THAT VC HAVE DETAILED PLANS FOR DISRUPTING ELECTIONS b-1 EC
; PLANS INCLUDE, IN ADDITION TO MASSIVE ANTI-ELECTION PROPAGANDA AND PROSELYTING CAMPAIGN, PHYSICAL INTERDICTION OF ROADS AND CANALS AND ATTACKS ON POLLING PLACES PLUS GENERAL CAMPAIGN OF TERROR AND HARRASSMENT.

5. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT ENEMY SUFFERED SEVERE PROPAGANDA DEFEAT AFTER FAILURE TO MAKE GOOD ON BOASTS PRIOR TO CA ELECTIONS LAST YEAR. THERE IS INDIRECT EVIDENCE THAT DURING THE VILLAGE AND HAMLET ELECTIONS ENEMY ANTI-ELECTION TACTICS WERE ADJUSTED MORE REALISTICALLY TO THE SITUATION. IN SEPTEMBER, 1966, THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE WERE TOLD NOT ONLY NOT TO VOTE BUT THAT IF THEY TRIED THEY WOULD BE PREVENTED FROM DOING SO AND WOULD RUN SERIOUS RISK OF PERSONAL INJURY. THIS SPRING ENEMY CONFINED BULK OF THREATS TO THE CANDIDATES FOR VILLAGE AND HAMLET OFFICES THEMSELVES. PEOPLE AS A WHOLE WERE TOLD THAT TO VOTE IN "FARCICAL" ELECTIONS WAS BOTH USELESS AND WRONG, BUT THEY WERE NOT WARNED AWAY FROM THE POLLS TO THE DEGREE THEY WERE IN THE PRECEDING YEAR.

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6. THE VC FACE A REAL DILEMMA: BOTH THREATS AND ACTS TO DISRUPT THE ELECTIONS COST THEM INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT, BUT IF THEY

SUCCEED IN MAKING GOOD ON THE THREATS THEY BENEFIT DOMESTICALLY. HOWEVER, IF THEY MAKE DIRE THREATS AND THEN CANNOT DELIVER, THEY LOSE BOTH WAYS. AMBIGUITY IN PROPAGANDA TREATMENT OF DEGREE OF VIOLENCE TO BE USED IS PERHAPS REFLECTION OF THIS DILEMMA.

7. WE BELIEVE FROM THE STILL FRAGMENTARY EVIDENCE THAT, DESPITE THE RISKS, THE ENEMY IS NOT WILLING TO ALLOW THESE ELECTIONS TO PROCEED WITHOUT A MAJOR EFFORT BOTH TO DISCREDIT AND DISRUPT THEM. WE BELIEVE THAT THE VC WILL EMPLOY VIOLENCE AS EFFECTIVELY AS THEY CAN, PERHAPS MORE SELECTIVELY PLANNED THAN IN PREVIOUS ELECTIONS. THEY WILL ALSO EXPLOIT TO THE FULL BLUNDERS BY THE CANDIDATES AND/OR THE GVN, AS HANOI MEDIA'S GLEEFUL TREATMENT OF THE DONG HA AFFAIR AMPLY ILLUSTRATES. THIS DOES NOT, WE BELIEVE, CONSTITUTE NEW TREND IN VC POLICY ON HANDLING ELECTIONS, BUT RATHER IS MORE REALISTIC TACTICAL ADJUSTMENT IN LIGHT OF EXPERIENCE.

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